[Vol. 1.] THE [No. 3.]

WEEKLY VISITANT.

"Be thou the first *our efforts* to befriend;
"His praise is lost who stays till all commend."

SALEM—SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1806.

ORIGINAL PAPERS.

FOR THE WEEKLY VISITANT.

ON AMERICAN LITERATURE.

No. III.

Tho' the poets of America are as yet few, and cannot be considered as rising abovet he second order, we are certainly not deficient in the talents necessary to constitute one of the first rank. Tho' many of the productions of the greatest geniuses of Europe, are not above mediocrity, they have never been adduced to prove a deficiency of talents. Not one of their great poems were written by men employed in other occupations, and who only wrote for amusement, in the intervals of business. Milton, it is true, held an office under the commonwealth of England; but his profession was that of an author, and his situation was given to encourage him to defend the principles of the republican party. Part of his time was employed to that effect, but it was merely in his leisure moments, and between the periods of poetic inspiration.* His great work was not produced till after he had become blind, and had retired from public business. Like every other profession, to acquire poetical eminence, requires a constant attention.

Those works which owe their existence to American talents, tho' they may not equal those of Europe, yet contain many of the flights which indicate a poetic imagination. Dwight's "Conquest of Canaan," possesses in this respect great merit, and claims the first notice, as it is the only epic produced in America. An attempt at a complete review of this work is not intended, and the remarks upon it are necessarily very imperfect, as the author does not possess the poem, and only observes on the materials supplied by his memory.

* Milton said, that at certain seasons of the year he was filled with poetic fervor, much more than at other times.

Mr. Dwight's choice of a subject has certainly not been very happy. He is not only precluded from depicting the manners of the age producing the events on which he is employed; but is debarred from that licence of invention, without which any poem fails of exciting interest. Every one is acquainted with the events as they took place, and the conduct of the Israelites is pourtrayed in the old testament in such a manner, that to introduce any alteration in narrating the great events, so far from interesting us, excites disgust. The subject is likewise a part of revealed religion, and as such, we have been acquainted with it from infancy. We look to the history of these events, to elucidate our opinions on divine justice and to see the dreadful effects of divine wrath, justly excited towards perverse nations. They are here told as they really happened, and all any poet can say, will not add one tittle to our knowledge on the subject. Any thing contrary to what is there related, we know cannot be true, and if only the same events are narrated, we can derive a much better knowledge of them by reading the scriptures than the poet.

I should think the events forming the subject of an epic poem, if taken from history, should be imperfectly known, so as to give free range to the poet's invention. In such a case, we know something happened, and we can believe it happened as the poet has related it. We can believe the interesting portraits he has drawn of heroes to be the resemblances of the originals. The Crusades, more than any events of modern ages, furnish subjects for the epic poet. History has given us a sufficient knowledge of the heroic manners of the times and general events, to enable a genius to interweave correct ideas of them, and at the same time, is so imperfect as to leave ample scope for the powers of invention. Tasso and Ariosto saw and improved these advantages. Mr. Dwight in his choice of a subject has none of them. He cannot indulge his imagination; and the manners of the times may as well be seen in scripture as in his work. Besides, the subject of an epic, should be one not common, and as before observed, we are acquainted with the historical part of scripture from our infancy, and as it is perpetually before us, it ceases, from want of novelty, to be interesting in any other than a religious light.

As I do not possess the poem, I must finish this paper with the result of a review, in the European Magazine.

"In his versification, Mr. Dwight, on the whole, is far from being unhappy, though in energy he is often deficient, and almost always wanting in that variety of construction, which constitutes imitative harmony, and is so pleasing

in some of our best poets.* Though we do not mean to say that Mr. Dwight is entirely destitute of variety, or a few not unhappy attempts at imitative harmony, these are so thinly scattered, that his versification may justly be accused for the greatest part with monotony.

"A strongly marked variety, with peculiarity of characters, as in Homer and Tasso, is not to be found in our author. That of Hanniel, who opposes Joshua, and advises at every opportunity the return to Egypt, is by much the best drawn of any in our author.

"In the conduct of his fable he often falls into egregious faults. His theological excrescences are often unpleasing, (witness Irad's defence of the slaughter of infants) and always tedious. The death of every hero of note in Homer and Virgil, has an evident tendency to the production of the catastrophe. But Mr. Dwight kills his heroes most unmercifully, without any such necessary tendency; and we have already observed, that in conducting his fable a proper gradation is often much wanted.

"Mr. Dwight has certainly a happy talent at description; but it is still in its peurility, and wants much cultivation and correction. His pictures are ill grouped, and repetitions of the same imagery often occur in the same description, by which he often falls into the anti-climax, and want of perspicuity, that *sine qua non* in classical poetry. We are often obliged to read many passages in our author twice over, ere we can catch his exact meaning; and the pleasure inspired by poetry is always lost in such drudgery.

"Invention we can hardly discover. We cannot conceive that original genius or the powers of invention are necessary to form such a fable as Mr. Dwight's; tho' in his execution some parts display true poetical imagination. In this the dream of Irad in the night before he is slain, in the beginning of the seventh book, and the burning of the forest which separates the combatants at the end of the same, are particularly happy; though even in these we are tired with repetitions of the same imagery."

The character given in the above extract, making allowances for the prejudices entertained by Englishmen at that time against American works, appears to be just; and as the poem was written when Mr. Dwight was very young, is a favorable testimony of his talents.

* Dr. Darwin in a note to his Botanic Garden, observes on one of his lines —"I suspect that this line is from Dwight's Conquest of Canaan, a poem written by a very young man, and which contains much fine versification."

FOR THE WEEKLY VISITANT.

PALLADIUM.

A friend of the late Mr. Tytler requested of him a true derivation of the word Palladium, upon which Mr. Tytler gave him the following.—

PALLADIUM :—An Image of Pallas or Minerva, (the Goddess of Wisdom,) kept in the temple of Vesta at Rome. It was said to have fallen from heaven, near the city of Troy. Others say that Chrysa,* when married to Dardanus,† had this Image as part, or perhaps the whole, of her portion. It was supposed, that in whatever city this Image was kept, that city should remain impregnable; but if carried without the walls, then the divine protection should cease. The Sacred Image, therefore, was preserved with the

utmost care in the Citadel of Troy. But when Pyrrhus ‡ had understood from the prophet Helenus, Priam's Son, that Troy could not be taken while the Palladium remained in it, and communicated this intelligence to the Grecian Chiefs, Ulysses || and Diomedes § found means to get into the City, and steal away the Sacred Image. According to other accounts, it was not the true Palladium which the Greeks stole, but a spurious one carelessly guarded by the Trojans in a public part of the city. It is said also, that Æneus carried off the true Palladium, along with the other Trojan Gods, and brought them to Italy.

* Chrysa was the daughter of Pallas, not Minerva, for she died an old maid, but a Giant the Son of Earth and Hell.

† Dardanus was the founder of Troy, the Son of Jupiter and Electra the daughter of Atlas.—This Atlas was one of the Titans, (a race of Giants who made war against the Gods. He was the Son of Japetas, and Japetas was the Son of Heaven and Earth.

‡ Pyrrhus was the son of Achilles and Deidamia. The latter was daughter to Lycomedes king of the Island of Scyros; and Lycomedes was the son of Apollo and Parthenope.

|| Ulysses, according to some, was the son of Sisiphus and Anticlea. Sisyphus was the son of Eolus, the king of the winds, and a notorious thief. His wife, Anticlea, was the daughter of Autolycus, the son of Mercury, who was also a notable thief, but Sisyphus surpassed him, and had Anticlea as the reward of his merit.

§ Diomedes was king of Etolia, the son of Tydeus, the son of Oenus, the son of Agenor, the son of Neptune.

MISCELLANY.

HEROIC LOVE.

From Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.

An heroic lover receives life and joy from the smiles of his beloved mistress; but death and torments from her frowns. Narcissus like, while the season is fair, he appears gay and glorious; but when the enlivening sun withdraws its rays, all his joys sink down, and die for want of nurture. The fair and lovely object is, when she smiles, the cheering planet whose beams irradiate his breast: she is the *primum mobile* of all his actions; the *anima informans*, that inspires him with life; the happy gale that gives motion to that windmill his brain, which otherwise would be inert and motionless. Animated by her breath, she keeps the keys of his life: his fortune ebbs and flows as she is pleased to smile or frown; and a favourable or unfavonrable aspect renders him either happy or miserable. Overwhelmed by his romantic passion, he cannot think, or talk or dream of any thing but the adored object: she is his Cynosure; his Hesperus and Vesper; his morning and evening star; his Lama, Victorina, Columbina, Flavia, Flaminia, Cælia, Delia; his life, his soul, his heart, eyes, ears, and every thing: his thoughts are full of her; sleeping or waking, she is always in his mind, and her blessed name the continual theme of his tongue. It were better a Metropoliton city were sacked, a royal army overcome, an invincible armada sunk, and that twenty thousand kings should perish, than her little finger should ache. Like the love entranced Calisto, his soul is soused, imparadised, and imprisoned in the heart of his lovely and transcendent Melebea; and her sweet face, eyes, actions, gestures, hands, feet, speech, length, breadth, heighth, depth, and the rest of her dimensions, so eagerly, earnestly, and violently surveyed, measured, and taken by the astrolabe of his heated fancy and inflamed imagination, that

if present, he is mad with happiness ; and absent, he thinks he sees her in reality, and extending his arms, embraces, like another Ixion, a cloud instead of a Juno : for the impression of her beauty continues fixed in his mind : and as a man, who has been bitten by a mad dog, fancies he sees dogs in his meat, dogs in his dish, and dogs in his drink, so the heroic lover sees the form of his mistress in all he looks at. But, alas ! if he be capable of feeling such an extravagance of joy, when his passion is cherished and approved, what bitter torments must he feel when it is discouraged or repulsed !

Bitter indeed ; for sad experience shows,
That love repuls'd exceeds all other woes,
From his sad brow the wonted cheer is fled,
Low on his breast declines his drooping head ;
Nor can he find, while grief each sense o'erbears,
Voice for his plaints, or moisture for his tears.
Impatient sorrow seeks its way to force,
But with too eager haste retards its course.
Each thought augments his wound's deep rankling smart,
And sudden coldness freezes round his heart :
While, miserable fate ! the godlike light
Of reason sinks, eclips'd in endless night.

AN APOLOGUE.

A gentleman, after having travelled thro' different parts of the globe, returned at length to his own country. His friends, as usual in such cases, flocked round him with eager expressions of welcome. "Bless me, how happy am I to see you!" cried one and all of them.—"Come, do tell us some of your adventures." After relating to them a numder of miraculous circumstances, "You know gentlemen, (added he) what a prodigious distance it is from this country to that of the Hurons!—Well, about twelve hundred leagues further off, I met with a very strange set of men, who often sit round a table the whole night, and even till the morning is well advanced ; but there is no cloth laid for them, nor is any thing to gratify the appetite. The thunder might rattle over their heads, two armies might engage beside them, heaven itself might threaten an instant chaos, without making them stir, or in the least disturbing them ; for they are both deaf and dumb. At times, indeed, they are heard to utter inarticulate sounds, sounds which have no connexion with each other, and very litle meaning ; yet will they roll their eyes at each other, in the oddest manner imaginable. Often have I looked at them with wonder ; for they never want spectators, who are seemingly attracted to them by curiosity ; and believe me, my friends, I shall never forget the horrid countenances which I have observed among them upon such occasions ;—— countenanes, on which were painted, by turns, despair, rage, and now and then a malignant joy, tinctured with uneasiness. Sometimes they appear furious as bedlamites, sometimes serious and gloomy as the infernal judges, and sometimes gasping with all the anguish of a criminal, as he is led to the place of execution."—"Heavens ! (exclaimed the friends of our traveller) what can be the object of these unhappy wretches ? Are they servants of the public ?—"No," "Then they are in search of the philosopher's stone ?"—"No," "Oh ! now we have it ; they are sent thither in order to repent of, and to atone for their crimes."—"No : you are as much deceived, my friends, as ever."——"Good God ! then they must be madmen. Deaf, dumb, and insensible." "What, in the name of wonder, can employ them ?" "Why GAMING."

ORIGINAL POETRY.

FOR THE WEEKLY VISITANT.

AN EVENING THOUGHT.

Solemn from yon dim star descends the night—
The roseate hues of evening slowly fade;
A thickening gloom steals gently on the sight—
Twilight's dark pencil deepening every shade.

From depths, where Naiads her pale tresses lave,
The moon upheaves her melancholy sphere,
Views her pale image on the tranquil wave,
And rolls exulting in her bright career.

If haply, when Eve's hues decaying fade,
The fragrant vale retain one lingering ray,
A thousand shadows pour from yon dim glade,
And chace the straggler to the skirts of day.

The vagrant breeze, whose pinions wander near,
Comes fraught with murmurs from yon lonely dell,
That crowding full on fancys listening ear,
Night's choral symphony to rapture swell.

While all below is lost in doubt and maze,
Above what splendor bursts upon the sight;
Athwart the welkin streams the meteor blaze,
And glow the twinkling eyelets of the night.

The doom of beauty here, Maria, view,
And all those charms, that rouse the poet's strain;
At Death's cold touch shall fade life's roseate hue,
O'er every charm the Grave's deep midnight reign.

Yet, when the vital ray shall darkly gleam,
In dim perspective life's fair scenes retire,
Thy spirit, lovely as the evening beam,
Shall smile above, and *heavenly* harps inspire.

No more, Maria, thy young bard accuse,
When themes so glorious on his fancy swell,
That he to beauty wakes not his rude muse,
Nor *yet* to love attunes the chorded shell.

ALEXIS.

FOR THE WEEKLY VISITANT.

LINES WRITTEN ON THE CLOSE OF DAY.

The sun has set, the glimmering stars are seen,
The deepening shades proclaim the approach of night;
The sullen moon sheds o'er the darkened green
A pale, unsettled, melancholy light.

The bat now hovers o'er the roofless cot,
The village watch-dog howls, foreboding woe;
The owlet's scream is heard, with ruin fraught,
And streams whose mournful waters murmuring flow.

See, through the silent glade a church appears,
Whose mouldering roof o'erhangs its ivy'd wall,

Whose lofty steeple grac'd through rolling years
Its moss-crown'd tower, now tottering to its fall.

O Time! thou ruthless power, whose course destroys
The peaceful cottage and the lofty dome,
The patron's wealth, the poet's airy joys,
And like a blast sweeps nations to the tomb!

Thou too, dread power! to one more great shalt yield!
Thy empty glass shall warn thee of thy hour!
Thy broken scythe shall strew the desert field!
ETERNITY shall reign when TIME shall be no more.

H.Y.

VARIETY.

Seasonable hints to the Ladies, for preserving health and prolonging beauty.

Dress should be accomodated to the season and climate. The laws of fashion can never control the constitution of our bodies in such a manner, that the people of a cold climate can without real impropriety borrow their dress from the inhabitants of a warmer one. French fashions ill apply to the United States. The furs of Russia are much better adapted to our winters, than the fabricks of France.—When we consider how the health is affected, it becomes an affair of serious moment, to whom we look for direction in forming our taste in point of dress. It would discover more real good sense to form our own ;—but as this would be troublesome, I do not expect we shall ever be so independent. Foreigners remark, that the ladies of Ameraca lose their bloom and impair their vivacity, at a very early period of life. I am of the opinion, that the irregularity of our climate is the principal cause of this unfortunate fact.—Perhaps this is a misfortune, against which there is no perfect remedy.—The effects of it, however, may be partly counteracted ; and our women may preserve their health, their vivacity and their beauty much longer than they do. There is no doubt, that a warmer dress in the winter, than is usually worn by our females, would meliorate their constitution, and contribute to their happiness.

He who is the man of most consideration in a little circle, will naturally detest extensive society where he is sure to lose his pre-eminence.—Men are infinitely more pleased with the company of such as, out of complaisance or ignorance, accede to their absurd propositions than of those who insinuate they are erroneous."—" These true and unexaggerated observations prove, that the generality of mankind are proud ; and that self-conceit is the fountain-head of pride." *Zimmerman.*

The wonderful propensity of the Europeans, to rob the Americans of the fame of having accomplished any thing great or glorious, puts us in mind of the following genuine anecdote ; An Irish officer, upon seeing a beautiful picture sketched upon a wall in America, exclaimed--"By J—s it is a fine painting--but it was never done in America." "Oh, sir," says his friend, "don,t you see it is on a solid wall and therefore must have been done in this conntry ?" —"Ah," replies he, "by J—s, I see that plain enough ; but I only meant that the man who did it was never in America."

Accident, that great genius, who so often directs the conduct of motals, and makes them famous, or defames them without energy of their own—Accident often determines whether we shall pursue the path of virtue or vice. There is no natural vice or virtue in the creature. If he is virtuous through education, he is so by accident.—This happens to have a vicious education, and he comes to an untimely end ; that has a virtuous one, and he dies an honorable death. Change the accident, and you change the man. Is not then the education of our children of the last importance to us as on that depends their future conduct, honor, and prosperity.

MISCELLANEOUS INTELLIGENCE.

FIRE !—On Thursday evening last, a fire broke out in the house of Mr. Edwards, in Carpenter Street, which consumed that and two others adjoining, belonging to Messrs. Chaplin, Lamson & Lord ; all of whom are industrious house carpenters. Mr. Farrington's house caught fire ; but by the exertions of the citizens, it was preserved from conflagration. The citizens of Marblehead, Beverly and Danvers were prompt in their assistance on this, as on every other like occasion. It is not ascertained in what manner the fire was first kindled ; but happily no suspicions of design are entertained.

PLEASING NEWS.

The last New-York papers mention that Mr. Parish had arrived there from London, and was said to be the bearer of dispatches from Mr. Munroe, announcing that our differences with Great-Britain, respecting the late capture of our vessels, were adjusted, through the interference of the English merchants and manufacturers. *Centinel.*

Peace was confidnetly talked of in France and Germany. The diplomatists were assembling at Munich, where it was said the Emperor Napoleon would proceed immediately after his trinmphal entry into Vienna. *Ibid.*

A lot of land has been given to the Boston Female Asylum ; by Wm. Tudor, Gard. Greene, Jona. Mason, and H. G. Otis. Esq'rs. upon condition that a permament edifice shall be erected thereon for the use the Institution.

Dr. Arles, from New-Jersey, has travelled through North-Carolina in search of gold, and has found it, in small quantities in the counties of Cabarrus, Montgomery, Randolph, and Mecklenburgh.

MARRIAGES.

In Providence, Capt. Thomas Webb, to Miss Rebecca Libbey, both of Boston.

In Danvers, Mr. Sylvester Osborne, to Miss Eleanor Willington.

In this town, Mr. David Beadle, to Miss Martha Silsbee. Mr. Thomas Oakes, to Miss Mary Howard. Mr. Thomas Gwinn, to Miss Mary Rowell.

DEATHS.

In Boston, Capt. Nathaniel Curtis, æt 63. Mr. Joseph Hemenway, æt. 39.

In this town, Mr. Edward Johnson, painter, aged 25.

Suicide.—In Charleston, (S. C.) Mr. Alexander Kemp, late of the house of Kemp and Fraser, mer. of that city ; he killed himself by cutting his throat and discharging a pistol into his mouth—No cause for this rash act has been traced.

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